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HARLEQUINADE

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HARLEQUINADE

A BOOK OF VERSES

BY

JUSTIN HUNTLY MCCARTHY, M.P. *mw*

ECCO QUESTO ARLECCHIN : È SEMPRE PRONTO A RIDER A QUATTRO GANASSE, PRONTO A LAGRIMAR'

Ippolito Baldassare, Veneziano, 1715



London

CHATTO & WINDUS, PICCADILLY

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DEDICATION

TO AMÉLIE RIVES

*ACROSS the sea the field of fame
Shines newly with a living flame,
And we, beholding from afar
Your genius rising like a star,
Salute its advent with acclaim.*

*And send, half fearful lest you blame,
These tunes, touched lightly on the frame
Of checkered Harlequin's guitar,
Across the seas.*

*In hope that, since the rhymings claim
The fair protection of your name,
Though all the winds and waves make war,
They yet shall pass the harbour bar,
And win your welcome, since they came
Across the seas.*



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HARLEQUINADE

NIGHT is dying, dawn is hieing
Through the darkness, while I wait
Underneath your window late,
Deeply dreaming, deeply sighing
For a vision fair and flying,
Fair as youth, and fleet as fate :
For this haunted dream of mine
Holds your image, Columbine.

In the sombre land of slumber
Lies the Earthly Paradise,
Where a girl with just your eyes
Moves in measures without number,
While the golden hours encumber
With their fairest flowers the shrine
Of our lady, Columbine.

Harlequinade

I will fiddle to your dancing
On my heart's unhappy strings ;
Think myself the peer of kings
If but one of all your glances
Comes my way, as sometimes chances,
While you float in fairy rings,
Wholly human, half divine,
Airy creature, Columbine.

Oh ! that I might wear the vizard
Of that rascal Harlequin—
Miss you, kiss you, woo and win—
So I would, were I a wizard :
For, by Venus' doves, it is hard
That your heart will not incline
To your lover, Columbine.





REMEMBER !

IT will please me to remember,
When my hopes and hairs are grey,
When from every ageing member
Lusty youth has slipped away,
That when summer still dissembled
With its fleeting, fairy show,
I have touched your hand and trembled,
I have felt my heart's blood flow
At the least of your caresses,
At the flutter of your tresses,
In my boyhood, long ago.

It will grieve me to remember,
When my passion-fire has waned
To a dwindling, dying ember,
That our lips and hands remained

Remember

To each other so long strangers,
Kissing, clasping, unaware,
Other lips and hands, like rangers
In Love's garden, debonair,
When each day or hour or second
Spent asunder should be reckoned
As a cycle of despair.

Let it pass ; I still remember
How your deeply-shadowed eyes
Brought a sunlight to December,
Making love alone seem wise.
How a word, a glance, enchanted
All my being with its spell,
To a lotus-country haunted,
Where the shades of shadows dwell,
Where in fields of Asphodel
Lovers wooed the fairest faces,
Won the dear desired embraces,
Quite forgetting heaven or hell.





ESTUDIANTINA

SPOON in his cap and guitar on his shoulder
Wandering, whimsical student of Spain,
Laughs at the ways of a world growing older,
Goes as the winds go and veers like the vane.
Not for the kingdom of Spain would I moulder,
Cooped in a town, till my pulses grew colder :
We must be free of the hill and the plain.

Sweetheart, your health in a flagon of sherry,
Give me a kiss and a wish for the road !
We, we are off with a derry-down-derry,
Wholly forgetting the wild oats we sowed.
Vale! dear damsel, as brown as a berry,
Though you forget me, I'm none the less merry :
Love is a debt that can always be owed.

Estudiantina

I, whom the wandering star of my destiny
 Leads a poor singer and strummer along,
Know of no better way—can you suggest any?—
 Than to accompany life with a song.
Those who have shekels—I never possessed any—
Bend for their luck to old Lucifer's crest a knee ;
 I am a king where the vagabonds throng.

We are the sages—a fig for your Platos !—
 Happy as kings with a mouthful of rhymes :
Over a flask and a mess of potatoes,
 Matadors, gypsicos, mountebanks, mimes,
Wooing all women and cursing all Catos,
Stringing our verses and swinging our gay toes,
 While the guitar with the castagnette chimes.

Marvellous medley of Plutarch and Pasquin,
 Half a philosopher, half a buffoon,
Landlords are always delighted to ask in,
 Just for the sake of our lute and its tune ;
Glad of a glass with the best of the flask in—
Glad, while we foot the fandango, to bask in
 Pretty girls' eyes by the light of the moon.



HER NAME

BEST of names that women wear
Is the name thou bearest :
And 'tis excellent, I swear,
That thy name should be most fair
Who thyself art fairest.

Sure thy name is like a spell,
Sure thy voice is magic,
When I heard it first I fell
Hopelessly in love—and, well,
Love is always tragic.

Love is tragic, whether in
Naishapur or London—
If you end it or begin,
If you lose or if you win,
Leave it done or undone.

Her Name

All the birds in all the trees
Chirp it in a sonnet,
Every breath of every breeze,
Every wind that sweeps the seas,
Bears thy name upon it.

In my dreams I found the fame
Cruel Time denies me,
For I dreamt an angel came—
Just your face and just your name—
Came and walked beside me.

If you slaughter me with scorn,
Better beyond measure
That I never had been born
Who would die to-morrow morn
If it gave you pleasure.





TRYST

I PULL my cloak around my chin,
The hard earth answers to my tread,
Through the cloud-clusters overhead
The white moon dances out and in.

By Jove ! I should not care to win
The empire of the earth ; to-night
I see my love, the fairest sight
Since first the world began to spin !





IDLESSE

TO JAN VAN BEERS

LAUGHING, languorous, capricious
Lounging on the pied divan,
Flirting with a painted fan,
Critics call you meretricious,
Idle, foolish, vain, and vicious—
All the wicked words they can ;
But no damsel so delicious
Stirred the soul of Mussulman,
Or made Persian bards ambitious
In the groves of Ispahan !

Tired at last of twenty poses
To perfect a painter's theme,
What an odalisque you seem
As your highness lies and dozes
In a world of wondrous roses,
Red as blood and white as cream,
While the latest sunbeams stream
On the golden crown that closes
Round a face that smiles supreme,
And the sable veil discloses
Beauty gracious as a dream !



FATE

THE flower you gave will die, my dear,
Its crimson petals must grow sere,
Its odour faint, and fail and vanish :
For Time, whose thievish finger strips
The pride of youth, whose icy lips,
With frozen kisses breathing, banish
The fever-flame from youth's warm blood,
And dull the brain within its hood,
Has pity on no boys and girls,
No laughing lips, no golden curls.

But while my heart and brain agree
To serve their master loyally,
This faded flower bids me remember
The shining eyes, the lovely face,
That lent existence light and grace :
And, as a man who blows an ember
From a dull spark to a fierce flame,
The lightest whisper of your name
Shall bid my pulses beat, in sooth,
With all the passionate joy of youth !



GOOD-NIGHT

SWEETHEART, here's a fair good-night
To the golden year that's flying,
Fading as an emperor might,
Soothed by laughter to delight,
On a throne of purple lying ;
While before his swimming sight
Floating tresses, bodies white,
Sound of song and dance invite
To departure without sighing.

Peace be with the year that's fled,
Pleasure with the year to follow :
May the roses' deepest red
Give their garlands for your head !
May your life be like the swallow,
Always by the sunlight led !
May your lightest wish be sped !
May you never dream or dread
That the merry world is hollow !



VALE

I HAVE little to remember—
Twice or thrice I kissed your hand,
Twice or thrice the glowing ember
Of my poet's passion, fanned
By your breath upon my cheek,
Flamed entreaty in my eyes ;
Twice or thrice I strove to speak
Words that withered into sighs
As the colour of the skies
Withers in the wild November.

But before our fortunes sever
You that like from me that love,
Since you found my verses clever,
Dearest, fling me down your glove :
Then forget me, if you please,
Daff me lightly down the wind,
Heedless, while you sail the seas,
That the heart you leave behind,
Out of sight and out of mind,
Loves you well, and loves for ever.



RECOLLECTION

I SOLD my heart for a flower and a favour,
A ribbon white and a white narcissus ;
Oh heart ! my heart ! for the joys that miss us,
The salt of living has lost its savour.

You held my heart in the lure of your tresses,
Your eyes beguiled me, you white witch-woman ;
God help him ! life can be dear to no man
Who wins and loses your soft caresses.

You with your dancing and I with my verses,
What shall we say of the world hereafter ?
Life is a juggle of tears and laughter,
Where love plays fiddle and youth rehearses.

I in love was the merest tyro,
Dreamed of the chivalrous, grand, heroic ;
I was love's Platonist, you love's Stoic,
Far from my heart as I was from Cairo.

Recollection

I shall remember your songs and dances
Through all the luck that the years may bring me ;
The smiles and glances you once would fling me,
I'd buy them back with my brightest chances.

For, just supposing my hopes go my way,
Give me gold, glory, the purse, the laurel,
Still luck and I have an ancient quarrel
For parting us, dear, on the Muses' highway.



DATE OBOLUM

SWEET, will you sell me a single hour,
For the fire of a kiss, for the breath of a flower,
For a sigh, or the verse of a song in your ear,
Or a gem as white as a saintly tear—
Will you not sell me one hour, my dear ?

Will you not give me this hour I ask,
For a golden scent in a silver flask,
For the painted shell of a summer sea,
Or the precious bag of the honey bee—
Will you not offer one hour to me ?

Have you no do-nothing hour to spare,
For a blood-red rose in your breast or hair,
For the sweetest tune that a man can play,
For sonnet or rondel or virelay—
Have you no hour you can cast away ?

Date Obolum

Give me an hour, you enchanting girl,
For a Spanish knife with a haft of pearl,
For an idol's eye, or a mummy's ring,
Or the first fair blossom of dawning spring—
Give me an hour and make me a king.

Weigh but one hour in your dainty hand—
'Tis but a pitiful pinch of sand,
'Tis but a plume from the wings of a dove,
A faded rose or a cast-off glove—
Give me my one little hour, my love.





THE GARDEN OF MEMORY

THERE is a certain garden where I know
That flowers flourish in a poet's spring,
Where aye young birds their amorous matins sing,
And never ill wind comes, nor any snow.

But if you wonder where so fair a show,
Where such eternal pleasure may be seen,
I say, my memory keeps that garden green.
Wherein I loved my first love long ago.





GIFTS

YOU give me gifts with a gracious hand—
A red carnation, a yellow primrose
More saffron pale than the pale sea sand
When Venus first from the ocean's rim rose,
Redder than tulips that stand in trim rows
In Mynheer's garden in Dutchman's land,
Or Persian roses by soft airs fanned
Where cypresses tremble in sombre slim rows,
By a poet's palace in Samarcand.

For your fair sake I shall love those flowers,
The yellow primrose, the red carnation :
Ruby and amber, these blooms of ours
I shall hold them ever in veneration,
As a charm for luck, as an incantation,
For light in darkness, for sun in showers,
For hope of blue when a black sky lowers.
I pledge you, dear, and I make libation
To youth's lost glory and love's lost hours !



SAPPHO

SAPPHO dances, Sappho smiles,
And this weary hour entrances
For a moment while she dances.
By St. James and by St. Giles,
I would tramp a thousand miles
Just to see her tread a measure,
Just to win the moment's pleasure
Which her beauty thus beguiles !

By Sorrento's waves of blue,
Girls with Hellas in their faces,
Sisters of the Grecian graces,
Pallas, Juno, Venus too,
Dance the spider dance to you.
I have seen it, *ay de mí*,
Twenty times I'd rather see
Sappho lift her silken shoe !

Sappho

Lazy loungers by the Nile,
 Watch the dusky dancers twirling
 In their wild voluptuous whirling,
As they used to whirl erewhile,
Full of serpent grace and guile,
 Girt with lotus-leaf and bay-leaf,
 For some Pharaoh, for some Caliph,
While they wooed his shifting smile.

But no Caliph ever knew
 Any girl who smiled so sweetly,
 Any girl who danced so featly,
As our Sappho—never knew
Maiden fit to wear her shoe ;
 And no Pharaoh, honour-laden,
 Counted such a golden maiden
In his comely courtier crew.

Look on her and hold your peace,
 Wise philosopher of sorrow ;
 Leave despair until to-morrow ;
Wait till Sappho's song is sung,
Till the passion-flowers are flung—
 Till the merry movement's ended
 Let, nor prithe be offended,
Sappho dance and youth be young.

Sappho

We shall age, we know it best ;
Time will come when songs and dances,
Woman's smiles and woman's glances,
Wake no echo in a breast
Scribbled like a palimpsest ;
But permit us, of your pity,
To remember she is pretty,
To forget that life's a jest.

Sappho dances, Sappho sings,
And our eyes and ears are haunted,
In that fairy land enchanted,
By the subtle spell that brings
Lethe of all loveless things,
Lethe of the sin and sorrow
In the bosom of to-morrow,
While our Sappho spreads her wings.

Seize the second, it is fair ;
We who watch to-night and wonder,
Time will spin us all asunder,
Passing like the ambient air.
We have lived and loved, we swear,
To the falling of the curtain ;
Let to-morrow loom uncertain—
Well, we neither know nor care.

Sappho

For to-night at least we seem
 To be happy, and to know it ;
 Every dunce might make a poet,
Choosing Sappho for his theme.
For a moment, as a gleam
 Of fantastic sunlight glances,
 Sappho smiles and Sappho dances,
And we dream a golden dream :

Dream a dream too bright to last—
 Dream a dream too bright for day-time :
 Where our youth is always May-time,
And no shadow e'er is cast
 O'er the tinted hours of gladness,
 Where no sullen shape of sadness
Grins into our eyes aghast ;
Where no future is, nor past.

Farewell, Sappho, midnight nears :
 Since no dances last for ever,
 It is fated we must sever ;
Each adorer disappears,
And each lonely hansom steers
 Homeward through the winking starlight—
 While behind the red cigar-light
Foolish eyes are filmed with tears.

Sappho

You who tread on wingèd feet,
Latest daughter of Salome,
Little reckon how you owe me
Many a bitter bosom-beat.
I forgive you, fair and fleet,
And the toast my lips that quaff owe
Is a triple health to Sappho,
To the sweetest of the sweet !





SAINT VALENTINE

YE who serve Saint Valentine,
Golden lads and gracious lasses,
Take your time before time passes
Swift as shadows o'er the grasses ;
Think to-day you're half divine—
Think, and drink this toast of mine
To the maiden who surpasses
Amaryllis or Cypassis ;
Pledge me round, and break your glasses,
Health to Lady Columbine !
Fling your glasses to the floor,
For the cup that pledged her beauty,
Hallowed by so sweet a duty,
Owes no service evermore !





AMBITION

OH that I were a wind, and free to blow
Softly against your face—
That I might float and murmur, breathing low
The story of the love I dare not show,
Yet never can efface
From my heart's resting-place !

Oh that I were a rose, whose crimson hue
Outglowed the sun-kissed West,
That you might pass and note me where I grew,
That I might please and so be plucked by you,
And placed upon your breast,
To die in that sweet rest !

Oh that I were the burden of some song
Which pleased your idle hour,
That I might for a little while belong
To the enchanted music of your tongue,
And my imperfect rhyme
Appear an angel's chime !



HIDDEN LOVE

LOOK in her eyes, and hidden love you'll see ;
Hear her but speak, and learn love's litany ;
Touch but her hand, you'll understand
How happy an unhappy man may be !

Would you be wise, Love spreads his hidden snare
Within the tangle of her golden hair ;
E'en as you gaze unto that maze
Your heart will fall and never rise from there.





FLOS AMANTIUM

THE poet loves the red red rose,
The lover wears the willow,
The laurel for the soldier grows,
And, sure, I think the sunflower blows
For him who braves the billow ;
But I who am no poet's peer,
No man-at-arms, no buccaneer,
No lackadaisy lover,
Believe the flower you fancy, dear,
The sweetest to discover !





A GIFT

FAIR girl, you were gracious, and gave me a flower ;
I swore, in poetical fashion,
To keep it in exquisite pledge of an hour
Of kisses and midnight and passion !

Yet, lo, I fling back at your feet, as you see,
Your gift !—and the moral of this is,
That your flower and your friendship are nothing to me,
And I care not a curse for your kisses !





IF

IF I were successor to Shah Jehan,
Or rightful heir to the Great Mogul,
Or the Sultan who sits in Istambul,
Or the Sophy who sways o'er Ispahan,
I would sell my state and become a slave
For a happy hour that I humbly crave !

If I had the keeping of Solomon's seal
And a thousand Jann at my beck and call,
I would summon the Afrits one and all,
And give them this task of all tasks, to steal,
From the wealth that lies in Time's withered hand,
One golden hour at my sole command !





COLUMBINE

ONCE while I sat and watched the stage
Dull as a desert wanting her,
And wondered at the latest page
Of my life's legend written fair,
Just for a moment at the wing
She came, and paused a moment there—
A rare fantastic, gracious thing,
All gold and sable in the glare
Of flaring gas—and, as I thought,
Sent just the swiftest second's glance
To where I sat and sighed, and sought
To wed the measure of her dance
To my heart's music beating fast—
A second's pause of perfect grace,
And then, alas ! the vision passed.
But to my eager eyes her face
Burned on the air, and in my ears
A thousand voices cried her name,
And, while my heart o'erflowed with tears,
I rose, returning whence I came !



MY BOOKS

ON level lines of woodwork stand
My books obedient to my hand ;
And Cæsar pale against the wall
Smiles sternly Roman over all.
Within the four walls of this room
Life finds its prison, youth its tomb :
For here the minds of other men
Prompt and deride the labouring pen ;
And here the wisdom of the wise
Dances like motes before the eyes.
Outside, the great world spins its way,
Here studious night dogs studious day.
A mighty store of dusty books,
Little and great, fill all the nooks,
And line the walls from roof to floor ;
And I who read them o'er and o'er,
Am I much wiser than of old,
When sunlight leaped like living gold
Into my boyhood's heart, on fire
With fervid hope and wild desire ;
And when behind no window bars,
But free as air I served the stars ?



ROSSETTI'S GRAVE

THIS myrtle from my master's grave
In this God's rood of Kentish earth,
In sight of yonder silver wave
That girdles round our island's girth
That was the chosen home of him—
This myrtle makes my eyes grow dim
With sudden tears and sudden strife
Of many memories that stir
My soul beside the sepulchre
Of him who wrote 'The House of Life.'
How many a melancholy thought
These withered leaves arouse in me,
Of days when in sweet eyes I sought
The Holy Grail of love, and fought
For art and immortality !
The days are dead, the dreams have fled ;
Youth's roses are no longer red,
But withered like these leaves that fed
On yon green grave beside the sea.

Rossetti's Grave

And you, the sunlight of my youth,
 You whom I served with songs and tears—
With songs for hope and tears for truth—
 Your beauty haunts the driving years,
And life and love obey the same
Subtle enchantment of your name !





ADIEU !

I CANNOT praise you, sweet; my verse
Limps lamely on from bad to worse.
Farewell, most fair—farewell, most cruel !
Shall I, to heal my wounded heart,
Indite an epigram, or start
A novel creed, or fight a duel
For you, fair queen of fans and frills ;
Or settle down and pay my bills,
And, like a decent Philistine,
Ignore the name of Columbine ;
Or, drifting idly round the world,
Anchor at last, with canvas furled,
In some dim port undreamt of yet,
And learn, forgotten, to forget ?





TALK AND THOUGHT

WE talked of Oisín and of Fionn
And ancient heroes of the Gael,
Whose voices thunder through the vale,
Whose shadows on the whirlwinds spin.

And while we talked of lovers dead,
And legends of the purple South,
I only longed to kiss your mouth,
To touch the curls upon your head.





ECHOES OF CATULLUS

I.

O VENUS, weep ! and, little loves, despair !
Beholding Lesbia tear her yellow hair !
Woe and alas ! her cherished sparrow dies—
The bird she treasured dearer than her eyes ;
Sparrow with whom no sparrow can compare.

For he was very fond, and well aware
Who was his queen, and would not hop from where
She sat, but chirped of summer-haunted skies.
O Venus, weep !

For now this sparrow, leaving upper air,
Goes down where Orcus eateth all things rare.
Accursèd Orcus, for thy latest prize
Be most accursèd ! See how Lesbia sighs !
O most unhappy bird ! O deed unfair !
O Venus, weep !

Echoes of Catullus

II.

Let us live and love, my Lesbia, and a penny for the saws
That the crabbed elders utter, croaking out their ancient
 laws ;
Suns may rise and set for ever, but, when once our little
 light
Sets, we sleep in dreamless slumber through a sempiternal
 night ;
Give me, then, a hundred kisses, and a thousand kisses
 more,
And again, with other hundred, other thousand as before,
Piling kisses upon kisses, swell the measure till we come
To the kingdom of the millions, there lose count, confuse
 the sum ;
Lest some rival learn the number of the kisses that we kiss,
And, through envy of the total, cast a shadow on our bliss!





ROSALIND

AND this is Arden ! Yonder gleams
Of silver mark the first of streams,
Avon, that lingering loves to wind
Through haunted Warwick's land of dreams—
Rosalind !

Nay ! yonder stream that softly runs
Beneath the best of summer suns
Is Thames ; and scarce from sight or mind
Are London's chimney-pots and duns—
Rosalind !

Well, Thames or Avon, be thy shore
Lethe's to London's dust and roar,
And grant us what we came to find :
The girl whose name we loved of yore—
Rosalind !

Rosalind

But, hush ! here comes the frolic maid,
In boyish coat and hose arrayed ;
For sure, the girl the bard designed
This moment treads the enchanted glade—
Rosalind !

Well, youth is brief, and time is fleet,
But you were fair of face, and sweet
The memories you leave behind,
Dear girl who made our pulses beat—
Rosalind !





LEUCONOË

HOPE not, beloved, to fathom with futile endeavour,
Weaving devices of playing-cards ranged in a row,
Knowledge to-day of the way that to-morrow may go ;
Close up your almanac crowded with prophecies clever ;
Leave it to Zadkiel to guess how the fates shall dis sever
Woof from the warp of our lives, and the ebb from the
flow ;
Seek not to guess where the grass of our graveyard must
grow ;
Vex not the stars with desire of the futile 'for ever.'

Catch at the cloak of the day as it rushes anigh you,
Let not a blossom of spring spend its sweetness in vain,
Love, and make light of the dreams that the angels deny you,
Smile by your fire at the sleet as it scourges the pane ;
Say to thy soul, Be at peace with the hours as they fly you :
Sunlight will soon be as snow is, and drouth as the rain.



AMARYLLIS

IS not to-day the happy day
That blessed the world with Amaryllis?
Ye winds and skies of springtime say,
Is not to-day the happy day
That makes March weather fair as May,
And crowns the year with Lenten lilies—
Is not to-day the happy day
That blessed the world with Amaryllis?





THE RED CARNATION.

Fior di garofano,
Ecco il mio diletto e danno ;
Ieri sognai che ti baciai la mano.

THEY say the red carnation shows
Devotion to the Stuart line—
To me its scarlet leaves disclose
A sweeter secret than the rose
Allows her lover to divine.

The blossom finds a voice, and says :
‘ I am the flower of her, whose eyes
A thousand times, a thousand ways,
Have set her lovers’ hearts ablaze,
And laughed them out of Paradise !’

What hapless lover long ago,
In some enchanted shadow-land,
Bade for love’s sake his heart’s blood flow,
That from its crimson tide might blow
This blossom for my lady’s hand?

The Red Carnation

Blossom of heart's blood, flower of fire,
You are the symbol of a dream,
Wherein I tuned a Grecian lyre
To vain delight and vain desire
For her who loves your crimson gleam :

Who lifts with dainty finger-tips
The glowing bud, that lightly breathes
Incarnate kisses on her lips,
While rain of ruined petals drips
Upon the ground in crimson wreaths.

I heed not who may hold the throne,
Stuart or Guelph I heed not—I,
The only sovereignty I own
Is hers for whom this flower has blown
Beneath a pallid April sky.

O House of Stuart, run to dust,
Your glory may not rise anew :
The hearts are still that put their trust
In your soft speech ; the swords are rust
That flamed on fifty fields for you !

The Red Carnation

The gallant heart, the subtle brain,
The daring hand, have passed away :
Only these crimson flowers remain
To grace some graves across the main,
And please a London girl to-day.

Bear every man his badge : I swear
That of all flowers I love the best
The red carnation, while you wear
The Stuart colours in your hair,
The Stuart blossom at your breast.





THE HAPPY PRINCE

TO OSCAR WILDE

AM I not grateful? Surely, never since
The Northern Master's heart and hand grew cold
As his own skies, have any tales been so told
More fair than yours is of the Happy Prince
For whom the swallow's frozen pinions wince !

What happy golden hours shall childhood spend
With that sour giant whom the Christ-child tamed,
Or watching how the foolish Rocket flamed
Across the welkin to a watery end ;
Or sighing soft for the Devoted Friend !

Long have I lingered an enchanted guest
In the green garden of your fairy tales ;
Yet for my thanks my fancy falters, fails—
I love them all, but love, indeed, the best
The red rose blossom of the Song-bird's breast.



BAL MASQUÉ

S APPHO stepping down her stair,
Debonair,
Drops her mantle dark as care,
Lifts her vizard, and lays bare
Such a face divinely fair,
That a poet standing there
Flings his heart into the snare,
Unaware !

Old Alcæus did not dare
To declare
To the Sappho of whilere,
With the violets in her hair,
How he loved her past compare
Luting a soft Lydian air,
Ne'er was goddess half so rare,
He would swear !

Bal Masqué

Sappho sleeps, says legend, where
Blue waves wear
High Leucadia, Cupid's lair ;
But the poet, but the heir
Of Alcæus too, may share
In his wonder and despair
If he should on Sappho stare—
So beware !





AT A DISTANCE

DEAR, you are farther off from me
Than my gaunt garret from the sky,
Or parching desert from the sea,
Or sound of laughter from a sigh.

I know you breathe our civic air,
And sometimes down some dreary street
I see you pass divinely fair,
And look for roses at your feet.

And sometimes through St. James's trees
You drive, a goddess of the light ;
And I can see you, when I please,
Behind the level lamps at night :

Where from some corner I can stare
Across that line of yellow fire,
And feed upon your face and hair—
The pain of exquisite desire.

What does it matter? Who will care,
Another hundred years or so,
That I wrote verses to your hair,
Whose tresses then in grass may grow?



A RAPIER

MADE in Toledo, town of Spain ;
Never a notch on its edge, nor stain
On its slender body, supple as cane.

Straight as I've seen a Dutch canal go,
Blue as the blood of a brown hidalgo,
Dapper as dandies who down the Mall go.

Cold as maidenhood, keen as care :
Severs a single floating hair,
Splits a skull as you slice a pear.

Duels that rapier has fought by the dozen,
When Tom would bluster and Jack would cozen,
And Hal offended a pretty cousin.





SAYONARA

(JAPANESE)

ALTHOUGH my home, since I have fled,
No longer answers to my tread,
Forget me not, ye flowers of spring ;
Let not your yellow, blue, and red
Be wanting where I made my bed,
And let the scent you used to shed
Still to my eves and lintel cling.





FUSI YAMA

(JAPANESE)

L ORD, in this world we vainly prize,
This mocking world we should despise,
There is no highway to the throne.
I sought from Sorrow's thousand spies
To hide me where the mountains rise
In lofty splendour to the skies ;
But where the deepest valley lies
I found a stag, who all alone
Unto the echoing void made moan,
And great tears filled his eyes.





A FAN

(JAPANESE)

SO long as I live in the world, dear God,
May my heart rejoice for the sake
Of the fisher who leans with his bamboo rod
On the shining face of the lake !
May my eye delight as I note his nod,
While he numbers his silver take,
And my ear rejoice when his songs awake
An answering note in the hawthorn brake,
Where the girl of his heart, Sweet-Pea-in-the-Pod,
Daintily girdled and daintily shod,
Waits for her lover's return, to break
Her fast on a gilded cake !





A GREEK CROWN

WEAR, O my sweet, the crown I send
By mine own fingers woven ;
Wherein the rose and lily blend
With all the hues the sunbeams lend
Anemones, and violets bend
Their purple bosoms cloven.

But while you wear it, dearest maid,
I pray you to remember
That beauties like those blossoms fade,
That sunlight ever yields to shade,
That sweetest summers ever made
Are followed by December.





FLOWER SONG

WHY so merry, foolish meadows,
At your spread of summer flowers ;
At your roses, like the red O's
In a bishop's Book of Hours ;
At your gallant, gay narcissus,
Tilting up his head to kiss us,
Newly washed by summer showers ?

Why so merry, pleasant places,
At your multitude of posies ?
For, behold a girl whose face is
Fairer than your fairest roses !
Nay, I vow to Heaven that Jill is
Whiter than your whitest lilies,
Spite of all their airs and graces.





ANACREON

RISE, O Anacreon, from your tomb of roses ;
Shed on my soul the spirit of your song.
Come, but with speed, my muse is dull and dozes,
Singing too little, sleeping much too long.

Dear brother bard, whom wine and laughing lasses
Served for the themes of most delightful strains,
We too would sing of women and full glasses,
Yet—the result scarce justifies our pains.

Words without meaning, metre without music,
Flow from our quill and stain the harmless page.
You sang of wine : but never wine made you sick ;
Though Athenæus darkly hints, my sage.

Nor, while you held some love in your embraces,
Came any doubt to chill your warm delight
In shapely limbs of girls, and lovely faces
Steeped in the passion of a moonlit night.

Anacreon

You never stopped to study your emotions ;
You never thought love sin, and wine a curse.
How can we wed our newly-fangled notions
To the untroubled lightness of your verse ?

Ah ! we are old and wise, my Teian master—
Wise with a wisdom hard to understand.
We study life, but you made Time move faster,
Holding some fair-haired flute-girl by the hand.

Is life a jest ? You seem to find it merry.
Give me your secret ; this is what I seek.
Was it that Chian far surpassed our sherry ?
Were maidens wooed more readily in Greek ?

Answer, sweet shade, for still my dull muse dozes,
Heeding no whit the hopes I've held so long.
Come, led by Love, your white hair crowned with roses,
Teaching your child some echo of your song.





OLD AGE

What were life or delight without golden Aphrodita?—MIMNERMUS.

O H, what were the purpose of life or of pleasure,
If Venus, our golden-haired lady, were fled ;
Let me die in that hour when I tire of the measure
Which beauty and youth with divinities tread.

Though the blossoms of youth seem the fairest of flowers
To men and to maidens, Time's pitiless rage
Strips bare to the wind of the winter those bowers,
And sets on the lover the seal of old age.

Then Care dogs his footsteps wherever he passes
And even in the face of the sun he is cold ;
He is scorned by the lads and despised by the lasses,
For such is the curse life has laid on the old.





INTIMATE

THESE poor blossoms which we strew
Tenderly before your feet—
Happy in being touched by you,
Whom they only lived to greet—
Die, and sigh their odour sweet
In an exquisite adieu :
Fairer fate flowers never knew.





A BEGGAR'S BURDEN

I WAS a jolly good fellow once—
Ridens et bibulans, amans et osculans ;
With a girl and a gallon I ne'er was a dunce—
Ridens et bibulans, amans et osculans.
If my logic was faulty, my liquor was good,
If my lodging was cold, there was fire in my blood,
When I noticed a pretty face under a hood—
Ridens et bibulans, amans et osculans.

I am a sorry old rascal now—
Horrens et claudicans, damnans et lacrimans ;
Never a penny I pocket I vow—
Horrens et claudicans, damnans et lacrimans ;
With an ache in my heart and a limp in my leg,
I dream that I'm kissing a quean or a keg,
And wake to extend my five fingers and beg—
Horrens et claudicans, damnans et lacrimans.

A Beggar's Burden

Ah me ! when I think of the days that were young—

Ridens et bibulans, amans et osculans !

Ah ! to reflect that my songs are all sung—

Horrens et claudicans, damnans et lacrimans !

So broach your worst flagon, and crumble some bread,
For this broken-down rogue who must beg till he's dead,
With never a tombstone to honour his head—

Horrens et claudicans, damnans et lacrimans !





PICARESQUE

I BID ye farewell, ye fair ladies
Who captured my fancy of old—
Dear daughters of Venus, whose trade is
To barter your beauty for gold ;
Too often I bought what ye sold,
Too often I lay where the shade is
Of Horselberg, portal of Hades ;
But now, when my blood has grown cold,
I turn to the cloisters of Cadiz,
A lambkin returned to the fold.

Woe's me for my manhood so merry !
Woe's me for the kisses so sweet,
For the smack of a flagon of sherry !
Woe's me for the pattering feet
That twirl while the fiddles repeat
Some tune about lips like a cherry
And eyes like a star ! Hey down derry,
My youth was as noisy and fleet
As the tramp of a troop down the street :
These memories of mine I must bury,
For youth is a snare and a cheat !



NOX MIHI CANDIDA

DELICATE Night, that shelters my beloved,
Shed dreams as sweet as roses on her slumbers,
Breathe on her lips soft kisses from the lover
Lonely without her.

Say, will she dream of Hafiz here in London,
Who far from Mosellay's delightful shadows,
Who far from Rocknabad's enchanted waters,
Vexes the muses?

Vainly you seek to praise the girl, my Hafiz ;
Is she not fairer than the maiden moon is ?
Is not her mouth a rose whose parted petals
Trouble a poet ?



SONNETS





VIRGINIBUS PUERISQUE

TO ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

THIS is the book of genius, courage, wit,
Of high hope, high endeavour, high desire,
Of words which answer to the living lyre
That rouses brave men's hearts ; and he that writ
Seems to mine eyes a tower whose lamp is lit
To warn life's wanderers with its sacred fire,
Even as the ocean temples of his sire
Showed seamen death and how to laugh at it !
Where'er he bides, by sea-kissed Skerryvore,
In sombre London, or Nevada hills,
Or nigh the laughter of Pacific seas,
Or where the Athens of the North looks o'er
The Lothian valleys, still his presence fills
The heart and soul with new-born chivalries.





A RED-LETTER DAY

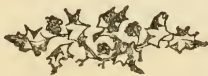
NOW God be praised for this enchanted day,
Since joy was in the promise that it spelled,
And joy in the fulfilment that it held,
And joy will be its memory alway,
Till my young heart is old, my young hair gray ;
For till youth's last rebellion has been quelled,
I shall remember that this day excelled
All other days that ever played their play.
Time will trudge on, the clock will wheel his round ;
But while I live my reason shall rejoice
To dwell upon thy beauty, and mine ears
Be happy with a burden of sweet sound,
The lingering echo of thy exquisite voice
Breathing across the desert of dead years.





ANNIVERSARY

A SECOND time the white-sailed swallow fleet
Float to some haven under Southern eaves ;
A second time the autumn fills her sheaves ;
A second time the winter's frozen feet
Crush all remembrance of the summer's heat
Out of the dead red melancholy leaves ;
A second time the web of nature weaves
Our paths where first they met, again to meet,
We meet, and, lo ! the year returns to spring,
The piping of this first November wind
Breathes to a lighter measure where we stand :
About pale Hiems' coat red roses cling,
The grey sky lightens, the chill air grows kind,
And gleams of sunlight cheer the sombre land.





GRATITUDE

I THANK my fate for every memory
Of you and your sweet face and your soft name,
Since to my eyes the sun seems but the frame
For your fair image, and the winds to be
Winged tongues of music, breathing lovingly
The dearest words of wonder, while the flame
Of the pale starlight ciphers still the same
Enchanted letters of your name to me.
Who could forget you, having once adored
The wonder of your eyes, or touched your hand,
Or heard your voice in kindness—who, indeed,
So long as man is made like man, to hoard
Delightful memories in his heart, or stand
Before a woman's face to praise and plead?





TO-NIGHT

TO-NIGHT, when jocund Folly swings
Its cap and bells, and dancers beat
Time to the tune with sliding feet,
When tired musicians scrape their strings,
When girls and boys are queens and kings,
When hands entwine, and lips repeat
Love's litany so honey-sweet,
And time goes by on crimson wings—
To-night my fancy like a ghost
Shall slide unseen through all the throng
Who fleet the time with dance and song,
And stand, unseen by guest or host,
To watch you dancing debonair,
With violets twisted in your hair.





PALMISTRY

WHY, when I held your hand, could I not read
The lines therein that did to me presage
The sorrow that no wisdom could assuage,
The tears my eyes, the tears my heart must bleed ?
Why in that delicate palm did I not heed
The warning written clear on the white page,
Where, like a tale upon a tragic stage,
My fate was blazoned for my hour of need ?
I read your fortune there and missed mine own,
Proclaimed you queen, nor thought myself a slave
To crouch in agony before your throne ;
And while your triumphs one by one were shown,
I, all unwitting, dug my own heart's grave
In cruel earth from which no flower has grown.





WITH SAPPHO

TO ELLEN TERRY

THE fairest to the fairest ! In this book
The wonder-woman of the age of gold
Lies, angel and immortal. Prithee, hold
This volume open in some silent nook,
Then, like some country girl to whom the brook
Is the best mirror, thou mayst there behold
The fairest, wisest, noblest face of old,
And deem thine eyes into thine own eyes look.
This is thy sister from the far-away,
Dear wonder-woman of our later day,
To whom in love all lovely things belong.
Take thou, the fair, the gracious, the supreme,
The incarnation of the poet's dream,
These lingering echoes of the Lesbian song.





THE ARABIAN NIGHTS

THE haunted East is here unroll'd,
Where Nilus draws a lingering wave,
And Tigris' yellow waters lave
Bagdad's enchanted walls that hold,
In arabesques of blue and gold,
The Sultan and the Persian slave,
The pilgrim to the Prophet's grave,
And all the wonder-world of old.
I lay the Empire of the East
Before your feet ; and if you deign
To linger at the Caliph's feast,
And spend a sigh on Ghanim's pain,
Remember too, though last and least,
The man who never laughed again.





A STAR

FRAMED in the darkness or the door ajar,
You paused a moment while the midnight air
Fluttered its kisses on your eyes and hair ;
While Venus, leaning from the heaven afar,
Hung out her beacon-lamp, one sapphire star ;
And where the slipped scarf left your bosom bare
I saw the blossom that your lovers wear
For love's own wound that leaves its cureless scar.
And, as I went, the memory of that hour
Seemed like some fair enchanted fancy, seemed
Like some dear dream too perfect to be true ;
But in my heart I wore one fatal flower,
The flower you love, and high above me gleamed
One star, blue fire against a vault of blue.





COUNSEL

THINK not to-day of nations that have been,
Of dear dead cities and forgotten days ;
Think not of trodden or untrodden ways,
Or homage due night's melancholy queen ;
These be to-morrow's, for to-day we mean
To play out life upon the strings of praise
Tuned to the iterance of love's voice, that says
The sowing brings the harvest, reap and glean.
To-day we have forgotten yesterday,
Forgot all troublous things, all love's distress,
All wasted hours of vain expectancy ;
And though to-morrow snatch delight away
And shatter all love's roses, let me bless
These goodliest hours that time has flung to me.





LOYALTY

THY fortunes are too full. The gods do not
Sanction in mortals such felicity.
Let all be broken off 'twixt thee and me,
Our antique friendship be, indeed, forgot,
Lest I, partaking of thy happy lot,
Should also share the certain misery
The gods have got in hand to cast on thee,
Seeing that the ripest fruit is first to rot.
Thus Amasis of Egypt long ago
Wrote to his Samian friend Polycrates,
Fearing a jealous Heaven. Not so I ;
You do not need me while your fortunes flow ;
But I will be beside you, if God please,
When you shall find life lonely, by-and-by.





PAULINE

WERE you Pauline, and I the gardener's son,
I might as madly hunger to attain
The unattainable, as falsely feign,
As nobly leave my dear revenge undone.
I might, Heaven helping, no less bravely run
War's uttermost peril, fired by hope to gain,
Through aching years and many paths of pain,
The ultimate hour that bids two hearts be one.
These are sick dreams. What man disdains to tread
The common earth, since God denied him wings
To skim the æther? Better to be dead
Than lose contentment with all common things,
Loving some star. Ah, Love ! the doom how dread,
That gives to beggars the desires of kings.





MEMORIES

I SAID I loved not memories, speaking sooth,
For who would raise the ghost of buried pain,
Lost love, dead dreams, and fond hopes hoped in vain,
From that grey grave of memory where youth,
Warm youth, grows pale and trembles at the uncouth
Shadow of death, nor dares to gaze again
Through the dim vault where all delights are lain
Lapped in their cerements, truth beside untruth?
And yet I lied, reneguing memory :
For there are thoughts too deathless for the pall
Of dark oblivion ; who would fain forget
His first wild voyage on life's tempestuous sea,
His answer to ambition's earliest call,
His joy in learning first love's alphabet?





VER ET AMOR

BE happy, for the spring is in the air,
And summer's brave ambassadors draw nigh ;
A livelier colour kindles in the sky ;
The lately naked boughs begin to wear
Their greenest garments, and aloft to bear
Their blossoming banners. Lilac clusters high ;
On the laburnum golden tassels lie ;
And crimson stars of May shine everywhere.
There is a rarer magic in the spring
Which tells of your return ; the common wind
Gives it glad breathing ; earth and sky and air
Herald you home. To me the tidings bring
Soft memories back of happier hours, and blind
My eyes with tears long unfamiliar there.





VITA NUOVA

DEAR, that I love you let me rather show
By striving to amend this life of mine
So marred from the ideal half divine
Of my youth's spring, than bidding passion throw
The purpose of its soul on the soft flow
Of lover's praises. Ah, fair Florentine,
I do conjure thee, being wholly thine,
To breathe on this new life and bid it grow.
I love you ! Men or angels could not give
A greater grace to love's confession, wrung
From the pierced heart, that bleeds, and bleeds in vain.
I love you, and for love's sake mean to live
The nobler way henceforward, though your tongue
Refuse to give the promise back again !





PARTHENIA

TO MARY ANDERSON

DEAR daughter of the Greeks, had you but paced
Long ages since the consecrated way
To that high shrine by the Athenian bay,
Where Phidias, fashioning gold and ivory, placed
His armoured image, surely, while you faced
Pallas, her priests would half forget to pray,
Whispering, 'Athena walks the earth to-day,
Or lo, our Goddess by a girl disgraced !'
They might have praised you, whose soft Grecian tongue
Was tuned to praise of beauty ; how may we,
Whose clime is cold, whose Northern speech is rude,
Whose world is grey, whose sweetest songs are sung ?
But, Gods forgotten, quit your clouds, and see
In one fair woman ancient Greece renewed !





THEODORA

TO SARAH BERNHARDT

D READ Empress of Byzantium, whom thy fate
Conducted from the arena's yellow sands,
The clamorous throats, the bray of turbulent band
Of Greens or Blues about the circus gate,
And placed upon the purple seat of state,
To be an Emperor's consort, with the wands
Of East and West laid in thy delicate hands,
How deeply hast thou drunk of love and hate !
Thy dark eyes conquer time ; this summer night
Breathes perfume through Byzantium, and the moon
Smiles o'er the Bosphorus' enchanted wave :
Thou art the girl who danced for the delight
Of noisy citizens one afternoon,
And on the next made Cæsar's self a slave !





FAREWELL

FAREWELL, my dear ! the pleasant dream is over,
The pallid face of dawn defeats the night :
I loose your hand, and am no more your lover ;
But miser memory gathers the delight
Of all our sighs and kisses under cover
Of his dark temple, and with lips blanched white
I blindly turn to grope, till I discover
Lethe to seal you from my mind and sight.
' No more your lover ! ' Nay, I lied in this !
Till hot desire is cool, till gold is grey,
Till hate seems like to love, and woe like bliss,
I am your lover. On my lips for aye
Lingers the red rose blossom of your kiss,
Till Time stoops down and spurns the world away.





SYMPATHY

YOUR sorrow is my sorrow, and your grief
Feeds on my spirit like a living flame,
And when you suffer I endure the same,
And when you weep I tremble like a leaf ;
And when fantastic Time, that plays the thief
With all enchanted thoughts and things, lays claim
To any joy of yours, his fingers maim
My life, my love, with pain beyond belief.
Your sorrow is my sorrow ; but, alas !
Your joy is not my joy, and cannot be
Since you are glad to sail that sundering sea,
Since you delight in coloured days that pass
Stirred by no troublous memory of me
And my boy's heart, brittle and clear as glass !





MELPOMENE

F AIR friend, you tread to your imperial goal
The gallery of Shakespeare's womanhood :
Love-lost Ophelia, Egypt's varying mood,
Pure Isabella, the relentless soul
Of Cawdor's consort, Desdemona's dole,
Bright Beatrix, the witch of Arden Wood,
The dear, dead girl of Capel's angry blood,
Belmont's brave lady masked in Daniel's stole.
Queen, though your beauty taught me first to know
That life was lovelier than the Melian stone,
I worshipped most the genius that could show
The stretch of thy proud art in every tone
Of exquisite passion, till I seemed to see
In that pale tragic face Melpomene !





SALUTATION

I WHO have wandered over half the earth,
Have sailed how many a mysterious sea,
How many a sacred river, yet to me
No wonder has been shown of so much worth
As is this gracious mistress of all mirth,
Pale priestess of all passions. Well may we,
In spite of all, find strange felicity
In the fair world which gave this wonder birth.
Yet in the very noon of our delight,
On the high pitch of joy a jarring note
Shatters the music with a sound of wrath,
Anger and sorrow blended, that our sight
Must watch, through tears, how your adventurous boat
Spreads its wide wings upon the white swan's bath.





HOMAGE

I HAVE no world to lose for you, no ways
Of pleasing you with any deeds of mine :
True, I can fashion verses in your praise ;
But you would weary of being called divine,
Although my forehead bore the circling bays
Of Laura's lover, or the Florentine
Who still beheld through all the gloomy ways
Of hell the eyes of Beatrice shine.
Think of me, if you think of me at all,
As one who, in some proud triumphal hour,
When all the air rang plaudits, and the hall
Was deep with blooms as Cleopatra's bower,
Crept from the crowd and fearfully let fall
Before thy feet one solitary flower.





CARPE DIEM

I FEED my eyes that when this present time,
So rich in all delight, has passed away,
And I have fallen into another day
To dream of summer midst the winter's rime,
My thoughts on memory starry stairs may climb
To that dear past of your enchanted sway,
And once again before your beauty lay
The halting homage of my humble rhyme.
I feed my eyes that I, like those who stare
Upon the sun, and with a dazzled gaze
See painted suns upon the summer haze,
May, long beholding you, see everywhere,
Upon night's blackness or the morning air,
The one fair face, too perfect for my praise.





RAIN

RAIN, rain against the windows, and the wind
Whistles its dreary eerie lullaby
Between the drowned earth and the sodden sky
That is with cloudy curtains muffled blind ;
The sad trees shiver in their sodden rind,
From their despairing boughs the drenched leaves fly
Too wet for any summer suns to dry :
Was ever English summer so unkind ?
And yet this black July, this baleful June,
Are fair, for summer came across the seas ;
We can defy the changes of the moon,
We can compel the melancholy breeze
That wails its requiem through the dripping trees
To change its music to a marriage tune !





A WISH

O H for some subtle juices quick to steep
The troubled brain in slumber, so to lie
In the dark vault of an enduring sleep
For aye, and—unaware how by-and-by
The world is covered by the conquering deep,
How from their spheres the heavenly splendours fly,
How stars and suns into the darkness leap—
Dream of thy face till judgment draws anigh ;
Or, since this is impossible, to dwell
In some cool cloister worn by holiest feet,
Silent save only when the child-voiced bell
Rings out each office : in such calm retreat
To lull youth's fever and forget the spell
Even of thy beauty which made life so sweet !





AT WESTMINSTER

THROUGH the great hall, the heart of England's story,
Across the Lobby's tessellated floor,
Through many a sombre oaken corridor,
You moved in loveliness, and lent a glory
To the gaunt Commons' House, so new, so hoary,
Young in stone years, old in historic store :
A fairer presence never passed before
Through that great battle-ground of Whig and Tory.
The loveless place grew lovely as you came ;
And I, who liked it little, for the hours,
The memorable hours, you squandered there,
Saw with beguiled eyes a scene more fair
Than Avallon's far isle of deathless flowers,
And sighed next day to find it still the same !





A BEGGAR

I BEGGED, my dear, a kiss for boon,
Which you, serenely wise, refuse,
Though I would buy it with the Jew's
Harsh bargain of a pound's weight hewn
From my quick flesh : though, Sweet, too soon
The kiss would end which I should choose,
For which I sighed through last night's noose
Of hateful stars and haunted moon.
The moon gives place, the sunbeams chase
The pale stars from the shining sky,
And from the dreams which frightened sleep,
When sleep at last brought meed of grace
To burning heart and brain and eye,
I waken, as I watched, to weep.





FORGIVE

FORGIVE me, dear—and, if you can, forget,
As all things are forgotten soon or late,
Desire and satisfaction, love and hate,
Pleasure and pain, and rapture and regret ;
Fair friend, forgive me, for my eyes are wet
With unfamiliar tears : close not the gate
Of pity against me where I humbly wait ;
Ah ! think of all the years since first we met.
If to be prudent, cool of brain and blood,
Is to be happy, you may rest content,
And pity your poor servant who has spent
His strength in trouble with a desperate flood
Of passionate thoughts : as you are fair, be good,
And spare my vexed soul further punishment.





NEW YEAR

IF verses, like the charms that wizards trace,
Might promise all delight to ladies dear,
What could I wish you for the new-born year
That is not yours already—youth and grace,
The fairest form, the most enchanting face,
The brightest eyes that ever scorned a tear,
Love and success—what more to wish you here
Where the old year unto the new gives place ?
But if by chance the least wish lingers still
Unsatisfied, to feed your fancy's fire,
What better purpose could the year fulfil
Than to accord you all your heart's desire ?
So your poor poet thinks, whose homage turns
To where the blossom of the red rose burns.





DISAPPOINTMENT

ARE all things disappointment? Must we turn
In this rank garden of life from tree to tree,
Catching at fruit and blossom eagerly,
Only to find each orb that seemed to burn
Live gold within its leaves the painted urn
Of ashes; must each shining blossom be
Dead as the wreaths of last night's revelry
Which footsteps of repentant riot spurn?
Is nothing worth the winning? Are the vows
Of lovers falser than the fleeting air?
Is every face a mask, however fair,
Hiding the horrors of the charnel-house?
Is every crown we set upon our hair
The cruel circle of thorns that scars our brows?





REGRET

MASTER of many sorrows, pardon me :
And thou, dear mistress of delightful hours
Of wine-kissed lips and couches of crushed flowers
Where I have rested lightly—woe is me !—
Farewell, I find no more felicity
Within the shade of thy voluptuous bowers :
Boyhood slips by apace, and manhood dowers
My waning youth with wisdom mockingly.
’Twas merry to be wild and never care
How golden moments left youth’s brittle glass,
To be contented while a woman’s hair
Caught our hot fancies in a scented snare ;
But the lure breaks, day dies, the shadows pass,
Deepening along the dial and the grass.





SAINT ROSALYS

THE fair girl in the mirror's polished plane
Glancing to witness with a woman's pride
The silken stuffs, the gleaming gems that vied
With her soft hair and shining eyes in vain,
Saw in its field the pallid face of pain,
The bleeding brows of Christ the crucified,
And, changing from that hour, became the bride
Of God, a ministrant in Mary's train.
Sweet Rosalys, if we poor mortals blind,
Gazing upon our image in the glass,
Where our poor ghosts give back their answering stare—
If we were wiser, would our eyes not find,
Beside the sinful man whose flesh is grass,
Christ's face of pity and pardon always there?





EMERSON

ANOTHER, yet another, of the years
Falls on thy dust, and still thy memory
Burns like a beacon seen far out to sea
By some storm-beaten sailor where he steers
His labouring vessel ; every wave that rears
Its writhing crest against his prow may be
His fate, and yet he battles patiently
Towards that fixed point where thy far light appears.
Even so the living lesson from thy grave
Shines to thy people like the lamp of hope ;
Thy high example gives them strength to save
Their fallen fortunes, lends them heart to cope
With the wild host of publicans who rave
In that Egyptian darkness where they grope.





C. S. C.

YE shades of Syracusan shepherds, weep
For him who loved you. To that land of dreams
Where Lacon entertains with rustic themes
A rustic muse on some Silician steep,
He shall return no more. He lies asleep :
Nor may Menalcas whistling to his teams,
Nor Battus piping by the haunted streams,
Ever arouse him from his slumber deep.
'I too am in Arcadia,' even Death,
Who, while Comatas runs his lips along
The reeds of Syrinx, modulates the stops
With icy fingers till the shepherd's breath
Falters, the praise of Pan is hushed, the song
Floats to a sigh among the mountain-tops.





KATHERINE

TO ADA REHAN

SURE from some canvas where the Veronese
Excelled in loveliness this lady came,
His fairest child, with tresses of live flame,
With wide eyes subtler than Sicilian seas,
With sweeter speech than Tuscan melodies,
With royal Roman lips that scorn the name
Of Love, with tiger spirit hard to tame,
Instinct with all Venetian sorceries.
Incarnate Italy ! Not otherwise
The deathless dreamer of our English scene
Conjured the shrewish angel to his eyes,
Whom since his eyes no other eyes have seen
Until you came, in God's good time, dear queen
Of all our hearts, dear sovereign of all sighs !





KATHERINE

THE day seems but a dull, eventless thing,
And life's account a blank, unmeaning page,
Which does not witness Katherine sweep the stage
With fury splendid as a panther's spring,
Which does not hear your matchless music fling
Back fierce defiance to Petrucio's gage,
Or at the last, when love has conquered rage,
Salute her lord, her governor, her king !
To see this and to love this is to live ;
The rest is but the driving of dead hours
Before the chilliest wind that ever blew !
If I to-day must to dull London give,
To-night I pass by Padua's proud towers,
And watch the taming of the angel shrew.





KATHERINE

AH, pity, pity, that the play must end !
Ah, pity, pity, that the painted curtain
Must fall at last and leave our eyes uncertain
Whether to weep for some familiar friend
Whose feet at last into the dust descend,
Or smile to think that midnight leaves behind her
A haunted memory, a divine reminder,
Of one fair girl whom all the gods attend !
Good-night, fair lady—so we take our leave
Of this fair world of merry make-believe :
The crowd goes out, the pleasant hour is over :
Farewell, sweet form and face—farewell, sweet eyes—
Farewell to the fantastic paradise
Of Katherine and Petrucio her lover !





KATHERINE

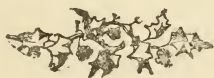
THIS is the keenest pleasure life affords—
To hear you speak, to watch you play your part,
To live again through your transcendent art
In that bright age so chivalrous with swords,
So brave in hue, so eloquent in words,
Where men with unmoved eyes beheld the dart
In love's hand or in death's, and the true heart
Answered the true heart with complete accords.
'Ah ! but our age is common, cold, and grey,'
I said—and, sure, believed it yesterday,
The yesterday before I saw your face,
Before I felt the living flame that burned
Within your eyes, the fire of art that turned
The common playhouse to a holy place !





KATHERINE

THEY say in that green island of my sires,
Where silver Shannon, widening, spreads away
To the great ocean, you beheld the day :
That from the city of the holy spires,
Where, long ago, the wild Druidic fires
Blazed to dim gods forgotten now and grey,
You wandered to the Land of Youth, to play
The fairest part the poet's heart desires.
Dear Ireland, mother of immortal names,
I, thy unworthiest child, here dedicate
To her who wears the sweetest of sweet names
These faded flowers of song, and eager wait
For the enchanted hour when Shakespeare's Kate
Upon the stage in crimson raiment flames !



BALLADES



AUCASSIN AND NICOLETE

TO ANDREW LANG

YOU give me back enchanted days,
When every wandering wind that fann'd
My forehead breathed Provençal lays,
And fancy danced a saraband
With fairies in Broceliande,
The haunted wood where first I met,
Midst other shadows, hand in hand,
Dear Aucassin and Nicolete.

The lovers whom the Persians praise,
The paladins of Charles the Grand,
The fighters in Arabian frays,
The golden girls of Samarcand,
The chivalry of Arthur's band,
The Queens where Avallon is set,
Can none for loveliness gainstand
Dear Aucassin and Nicolete.

Aucassin and Nicolete

Your Helen too, the world's amaze,
For whom the Argive chieftains mann'd
Their black ships in the Grecian bays,
And ground their keels in Ilion's strand
And Dardan Paris, Ilion's brand,
Were fair and famous lovers—yet,
Methinks, I watch with fonder gaze
Dear Aucassin and Nicolete.

ENVOY.

Poet and Prince of fairy-land,
Our hearts are deeply in your debt,
For quickening with your wizard's wand
Dear Aucassin and Nicolete.





A BALLADE OF ROSES

τὸ ῥόδον τὸ τῶν ἐρώτων

WHEN Venus saw Ascanius sleep
On sweet Cythera's snow-white roses
His face, like Adon's, made her weep,
And long to kiss him where he dozes ;
But, fearing to disturb the boy,
She kissed the pallid blooms instead,
Which blushed, and kept their blush for joy,
When Venus kissed white roses red.

Straight of those roses she did reap
Sufficient store of pleasant posies,
And coming from Cythera's steep,
Where every fragrant flower that grows is,
She tossed them for the winds to toy
And frolic with till they were dead ;
Heaven taught the earth a fair employ
When Venus kissed white roses red.

A Ballade of Roses

For each red rose the symbol deep
In its sad, happy heart encloses
Of kisses making love's heart leap ;
And every summer wind that blows is
A prayer that ladies be not coy
Of kisses ere brief life be sped :
There gleamed more gold in life's alloy
When Venus kissed white roses red.

ENVOY.

All lovers true, since windy Troy
Flamed for a woman's golden head,
You gained surcease from life's annoy
When Venus kissed white roses red.





A BALLADE OF THE ACTRESSES
OF OLD TIME

WHERE are the ladies of old time,
The actresses of long ago, *The idols of a world of rhyme*
Who staged their beauty to the show
When all the gallants sat arow,
Upon the stage where Oldfield drew,
And Perdita was worshipped so?
No one was half so fair as you !

Here in this shadow pantomime
Again the gracious figures go,
Again the bells of midnight chime,
Again the ruddy flambeaux glow
Outside the playhouse portico ;
Though here again the modish crew
Salute each flame in furbelow,
No one was half so fair as you !

The Actresses of Old Time

Though here Bracegirdle rouses crime
In mad Mohun's black heart, and slow
The feet of laughing Baddeley climb,
Beneath the rapiers of the beaux,
The gilded stairway in Soho ;
Though Siddons takes her tragic cue,
And Woffington brings London low,
No one was half so fair as you !

ENVOY

Lady, it grieves our hearts to know
That we must lose those hearts anew,
For since the world began to grow
No one was half so fair as you !





A BALLADE OF LOST TREASURE

WHAT has become of the Niblung hoard
That Siegfried left in the Rhine, they say ;
Where is the treasure Attila stored
In meadows where Tiber takes his way ;
Or all the glory that used to glow
In Babylon town, whose mighty wall
Has fallen asunder long ago ?
My lucky sixpence is worth them all !

Where is the booty flung overboard
By Captain Kidd in the northern bay ;
Where is the gold that roofed and floored
Orchomenus town, unknown to-day ?
The gifts the Delphian priests could show
To those who on Apollo call,
Have vanished all, like last year's snow—
My lucky sixpence is worth them all !

A Ballade of Lost Treasure

Who owneth now the magic sword
That Arthur seized in the sight of Kay,
Or a single one of the coins Jove poured
In golden rain on Danae ;
Who now the precious cup may know
Which Helen in the sea let fall,
What time the Greeks from Troy did go ?
My lucky sixpence is worth them all !

ENVOY.

Prince, if you could as gifts bestow
The treasures which I here recall,
I still should give you answer so :
My lucky sixpence is worth them all !





A BALLADE OF JAPAN

LEAVE smart St. James' and stark St. Giles',
Give dreary London the go-by ;
Float fancy free ten thousand miles
O'er Eastern seas, and feast your eye
With that enchanted land where man
Makes life a dream of form and dye,
The Everlasting Great Japan.

The magic picture-book beguiles
Our flattered sight to play the spy
On holy Nippon's happy isles,
Where lanterns float and banners fly
O'er streets where swift jinrickshaws fly,
And life is like a lady's fan
Where Fusi Yama sweeps the sky—
The Everlasting Great Japan.

A Ballade of Japan

A land of sunlight and of smiles,
Where dainty dancing-girls reply
To fair flower-names ; where still the styles
Of distant centuries defy
The Paris mode ; where poets sigh
In 'pillow words' severe to scan—
A land, they say, to see and die,
The Everlasting Great Japan.

ENVOY.

Friend, if you're tired of London, try
A year-long journey in the span
Of one small book, where you descry
The Everlasting Great Japan.





A BALLADE OF BOOK-MAKING

WHEN wise Koheleth long ago—
 Though when and how the pundits wrangle—
Complained of books, and how they grow
 And twist poor mankind's brains a-tangle,
 He did not dream the fatal fangle
To such a pitch would e'er extend,
 And such a world of paper mangle—
Of making books there is no end.

The poets weep for last year's snow,
 About the porch the schoolmen dangle,
The owl-like eyes of science glow
 O'er arc, hypotenus, and angle ;
 The playwrights mouth, the preachers jangle,
The critics challenge and defend,
 And Fiction turns the Muses' mangle—
Of making books there is no end.

A Ballade of Book-making

Where'er we turn, where'er we go,
The books increase, the bookmen brangle ;
Our book-shelves groan with row on row
Of nonsense typed in neat quadrangle.
Better to burn the lot and twangle
An honest banjo ; better tend
To ride and box and shoot and angle—
Of making books there is no end.

ENVOY.

Few books are worth a copper spangle :
Come forth and choose, my dusty friend,
The ranchman's rope, the nautch-girl's bangle—
Of making books there is no end.





A BALLADE OF TAVERNS

TO WILL BELL

ALL the famous taverns in town—
Mitres, Daggers, Lions, Mermaids,
Goat and Compasses, Mourning Crown,
Boar's Head, Windmill, and Ace of Spades,
The Mischief Inn, with its jest at jades,
Three Cranes, chiefest of hostelries,
Fall away to the shades of shades—
Time has toasted the Cheshire Cheese.

The London Stone, of antique renown,
Hard by that chronicled throne of Cade's ;
The Tabard, dear to the pilgrim's gown ;
The Robin Hood, keeping green the raids
Of the robber captain of Sherwood glades ;
The Cock, the Pillars of Hercules,
Destiny each in its turn degrades—
Time has toasted the Cheshire Cheese.

A Ballade of Taverns

The Plough, belov'd by the country clown,
Has vanished ; St. Christopher no more wades ;
Heaven and Hell are both pulled down ;
No more the teachers of thievish trades,
Shakers of dice-box, bearers of blades,
Meet at the Rose among Marybone trees—
They were silenced by hempen braids—
Time has toasted the Cheshire Cheese.

ENVOY.

Tavern-hunter, weep for the maids
And men who have taken their latest fees,
For the gaudy sign-board that splits and fades—
Time has toasted the Cheshire Cheese.





A BALLADE OF FINGAL

FINGAL, bearer of battle's scar,
Mighty monarch of Ossian's lay,
One who lives in a land afar,
Fringed by the fierce Atlantic spray,
Wandering there where the waters play
Soft by Staffa in wave on wave,
Smiles and says as he comes away,
'Only a fable is Fingal's Cave.'

Was it for this that your fiery star
Led your boat to that distant bay,
Where, in desperate stress of war,
Treacherous chieftains of Norrøway
Sought, and fruitlessly sought, to slay
Fingal, the bravest of the brave?
Lo ! an American hints to-day,
'Only a fable is Fingal's Cave.'

A Ballade of Fingal

Was it for this that you drove your car
Through your enemies' stern array,
Led by the slayer of Corman-Trunar ?
Ah ! did you fight in so many a fray,
Till your hair and your beard were grey,
And sink at last to a hero's grave,
That some stranger might whisper, 'Nay,
Only a fable is Fingal's Cave' ?

ENVOY.

Fingal, fame and your bones decay,
Rust has eaten your trenchant glaive,
Sceptical travelling students say,
'Only a fable is Fingal's Cave' !





A BALLADE OF 'THE CANDIDATE'

WHAT hard conundrums people ask :
Who wrote the Letters Junius signed ?
Where was the Kit-Kat's 'Upper Flask' ?
What dead Egyptian hand and mind
The high Pyramides designed
Beside old Nile's mysterious spate ?
Or, answer harder still to find,
Who dramatised 'The Candidate' ?

Was Clarence drowned in Malmsey cask ?
Was there a Homer old and blind ?
Who was the Man in the Iron Mask ?
Must Bacon's wreath be intertwined
With bays, in Shakespeare's tomb enshrined,
As certain students 'calculate' ?
Or, question of a harder kind,
Who dramatised 'The Candidate' ?

A Ballade of 'The Candidate'

What nameless master took for task
The Thousand Nights in one to bind,
For Bagdad's Caliphs where they bask
By Tigris' yellow waves reclined ?
Who drew the Testament assigned
To Russian Peter, First and Great ?
Or, harder still to be defined,
Who dramatised 'The Candidate' ?

ENVOY.

Friend, if to journey you're inclined
So far as famous Wishing Gate,
Desire to learn from answering wind
Who dramatised 'The Candidate' ?



RONDEAUS



LOVE IN LONDON

IN London Town men love and hate,
And find Death tragic soon or late,
Just in the old unreasoning way,
As if they breathed the warmer day
In Athens when the gods were great.
Mine is the town by Thames's spate,
And so it chanced I found my fate—
One of my fates, that is to say—
In London Town.

The whole world comes to those who wait ;
Mine came and went with one year's date.
Pity it made so short a stay !
The sweetest face, the sweetest sway,
That ever Love did consecrate
In London Town.



ROSE OF MAY

O ROSE of May, I could not praise
Your beauty in a fairer phrase,
Unless poor mortal lips might choose
Such utterance as angels use.
Rose of all roses, May of Mays,
Where'er your gracious presence stays,
The sun his golden course delays,
And summer wears immortal hues,
O rose of May !

My planet floats from phase to phase,
And now gives hope, and now gainsays :
In dreams I win, and wake to lose
While sorrow, like the soul, renews
Its youth in dreams of happier days,
O rose of May !



AT YOUR COMMAND

AT your command I have begun
To rhyme a rondeau ; when 'tis done
I think some praise should be my due
From your kind heart, if you but knew
How hardly poor success is won :
Bound down by laws, the rhymes are spun
In proper sequence, one by one :
Behold, my task is half way through,
At your command !

But since his rhymes, alas, will run
From this poor singer, who should shun
All hope of fitly praising you,
This is no task for me to do :
Yet I would try to reach the sun,
At your command !



WITH CHANGING DAYS

WITH changing days that come and go,
Like painted puppets in a show
Having the shape of everything,
From beggar-man to crowned king,
To-day grows into long ago.
As well enquire for last year's snow
In this year's spring, as seek to know
What gifts the autumn-tide shall bring
With changing days.

But kindly fate contrives to sow
Some flowers amid the weeds that grow
About Time's feet, to climb and cling
Around his scythe and stop its swing :
I trust that you may find it so
In changing days.



O YE WHO LIE !

O YE who lie, if I who weep
For dead love's sake, and fain would keep
My sorrow with myself alone,
Can ye not let my sorrow moan
Its troubled senses into sleep ?
O pitiful, who hold love cheap,
Saying Sorrow should be his to reap
Who any soul with love has sown :
O ye who lie !

It were far better we should steep
Our souls in Lethe dark and deep,
Than, wholly tearless, to dethrone
Some love we worshipped as our own.
Into a shameful silence creep,
O ye who lie !

RONDELS



IF YOU HAD ONLY LOVED ME

IF you had only loved me, dear,
You might have saved my soul, I think :
Poor lonely soul, condemned to sink
Through darker ways and disappear,
While you—ah ! you stand smiling near
And watch me drowning from the brink.
If only you had loved me, dear,
You might have saved my soul, I think :
One swimmer more in the great mere
Drifts to his doom and does not shrink ;
One victim more the hemlock-drink
Lifts to his lips without a tear.
If you had only loved me, dear,
You might have saved my soul, I think.



I LOVE YOU DEARLY!

I LOVE you dearly, O my sweet !
Although you pass me lightly by,
Although you weave my life awry,
And tread my heart beneath your feet.
I tremble at your touch ; I sigh
To see you passing down the street ;
I love you dearly, O my sweet !
Although you pass me lightly by.
You say in scorn that love 's a cheat,
Passion a blunder, youth a lie—
I know not : only, when we meet,
I long to kiss your hand, and cry,
'I love you dearly, O my sweet !
Although you pass me lightly by.'



RONDEL

AFTER CHARLES D'ORLÉANS

WHAT would you have me do, my heart—
 Shall I go seek my sweet again,
 To tell her all the mortal pain
Whereof for her I bear the smart?
What counsel have you to impart
 To serve her honour and your gain:
What would you have me do, my heart—
 Shall I go seek my sweet again?
For she, so full of gentle art,
 Would never lend an ear in vain
 To this poor lover's fond complain:
Now is not this the better part?
What would you have me do, my heart—
 Shall I go seek my sweet again?

TRIOLETS



IN THE DAYS OF MY YOUTH

IN the days of my youth
I wooed women with sonnets :
My ideas were uncouth
In the days of my youth ;
Now I know that her ruth
Is best reached by new bonnets :
In the days of my youth
I wooed woman with sonnets.





ALAS, HOW FAST!

ALAS, how fast a year goes past !
It seems a day since our first meeting—
Like one fair day from first to last ;
Alas, how fast a year goes past !
Till smiling love now stands aghast
To find delightful days so fleeting.
Alas, how fast a year goes past !
It seems a day since our first meeting.





HERE'S A FLOWER FOR YOUR GRAVE

HERE'S a flower for your grave,
Little love of last year ;
Since I once was your slave,
Here's a flower for your grave ;
Since I once used to rave
In the praise of my dear,
Here's a flower for your grave,
Little love of last year.





*YOU TOLD YOUR WILLING BARD
TO SING*

YOU told your willing bard to sing,
But made no choice of tears or laughter ;
So think this story just the thing
You told your willing bard to sing :
It opens ' There was once a king,'
And ends with ' happy ever after.'
You told your willing bard to sing,
But made no choice of tears or laughter.





WHAT SHALL WE DO?

WHAT shall we do the day you sail
Across the weary winter sea,
Far from enchanted Innisfail?
What shall we do the day you sail
Far from Old England's frontier pale?
Alas ! how lonely we shall be :
What shall we do the day you sail
Across the weary winter sea?



REGRETS



ALAS !

I WANDER in the haunted streets
Where we have trysted long ago,
And hear the spring's shrill clarion blow
A greeting to the vernal heats,

And all the pulses of the earth
Throb welcome to the wakening year ;
But like a ghost I wander here,
Strung out of tune to Nature's mirth,

Or like some traveller from afar,
Who turns to home and finds it changed,
And he in early haunts estranged
As if he trod some alien star.

I thought the sun had left the sky,
I thought my heart was turned to stone,
The day you left me all alone,
Abandoned with no last good-bye.

Alas !

Ah ! did you, dearest, understand
How love possessed and mastered me,
Till all my being seemed to be
Within the hollow of your hand?

Lo, how I loved you ! with what spell
Did you my heart and soul ensnare,
Till you alone made life seem fair !
It is not wise to love so well ;

Because if I had loved you less
I should have vexed you less, perhaps.
But, oh ! what tides of time must lapse.
Ere I forget your least caress ;

Since all the pride of life became
A blotted page in Sorrow's books,
On the dark day when hope forsook
My life, and life was seared with flame ;

And in my pain I seemed to watch
By mine own body lying stark,
And mutter ayes in the dark,
And listen for the lifted latch,

And note the bearers, grave and grim,
Slip noiselessly across the floor,
And bear my body through the door :
And for myself mine eyes grew dim

Alas !

With film of unfamiliar tears
For that dishonoured body borne
Away, with only me to mourn
My youth and all the perished years.

And, waiting in that lonely place,
I wept the cause of my despair—
The body more than common fair,
The mind of more than common grace.

Dear lover with the loyal eyes,
Dear comrade with the smiling face,
Whose friendship made so fair a place
Of weary world and wintry skies ;

Sweet lips, so skilful to console,
I never more shall feel thy breath—
Lost in this hollow dream of death,
The gaunt God's acre of the soul.

Within the body of a girl,
As sweet as spring, as fair as May,
The spirit of an angel lay
Like sunlight in a globe of pearl.

I trembled for my tortured mind
In that first tempest of my grief,
When reason, like a withered leaf,
Flew to and fro on passion's wind ;

Alas !

When first the fever of my pain
Seemed to take monstrous shape, and feed,
With all a carrion-creature's greed,
On bleeding heart and burning brain :

But when the vulture fever fed
Its fill for cycles, age on age,
And glutted its fantastic rage,
It slowly spread its vans and fled,
And left me racked and worn and weak,
With widowed memory free to prize
The strange enchantment of your eyes,
The tender outline of your cheek.

In memory's casket, closely shut,
The brightest hours of life, the best,
Are set apart from all the rest,
Like Grecian medals nobly cut—

And these, in silence and alone,
I linger over lover-kind ;
And of the pictures of the mind
This is, I think, the dearest one :

A slumber by a haunted lake,
A shadow slipping through the night,
And on my lips your lips alight
In dream before my senses wake :

Alas !

A moment, and the vision flies ;
But on my lips there lingers flame,
And, trembling, I call out your name,
Searching the dark with straining eyes.

My life is like that summer night :
On mouth and eyes your kisses ache,
And once again, alas ! I wake,
And once again the dream takes flight.

Ah ! my fair days, my smiling hours,
The golden moments of our bond,
Take a farewell, prolonged and fond—
Farewell, farewell, ye faded flowers !

Good-bye, my dear, my youth is done ;
Fate slew it with relentless hand ;
I've dug its grave in shadowland,
And reared a stone above its head,

With this for writing, 'Gone is Gone,
And Dead is Dead,' as Sibenkaes
Heard the poor beggar in the ways
Sing when his youth, like mine, was done.

To stand beside a yawning grave,
To know the best of life lies dead,
And yet to walk with lifted head,
To smile and struggle to be brave :

Alas !

This is to suffer for my sins
A daily, hourly martyrdom—
Yet hopeless when the end has come
To wear the crown the martyr wins.

If God would grant me heart of stone,
And stronger brain than tempered steel,
I might with stoic mien reveal
My sorrow to myself alone.

But if we frame a kind farewell
When some chance friend attempts the sea,
Shall I not offer threnody
To the dead past I loved so well?

For never shall my youth return
With summer roses in its hair,
Whose whispers are enchanted air,
Whose lips with living passion burn.

My life is stiff and stooped and grey,
Like some poor beggar hunched and old,
Heedless alike of winter's cold
And summer's carnival display.

Like that mad fool who loved the day,
I have grown old and worn and bent
Beneath my cruel punishment,
Since love from life was snatched away.

Alas !

Once, like a fool, I talked of fame ;
 Once, in my pride, I dreamed it sweet
 To lay my laurels at your feet
And make you prouder of my name ;

But you, my star, my lure to fame,
 May heed no more, though through the world
 My name from pole to pole were hurled
In ecstasy of fierce acclaim.

I loved you, dear, with all my heart,
 I loved you, dear, with all my soul—
For you I longed for glory's goal,
 And laboured for the crowns of Art.

But still each tear, each bosom-beat,
 Are sweeter tributes to your power
 Than when of old I spent an hour
In casting flowers before your feet.

A poet, in a pause from strife,
 When all Italia's banners shook,
 Wrote, prefacing his sweetest book,
That ' Here beginneth the New Life ' :

So my new life begins austere,
 I have done with love and all the rest ;
 My heart is broken in my breast
For your sweet sacred name, my dear.

Alas !

Some secret thoughts too sweet for verse,
To falter at in memory,
Lie garnered up in dreams for me
To make the new existence worse.

Dear angel of my youth, adieu !
To me life's tale is told in vain,
Who may not kiss your lips again,
Or tell again my love to you ;

But, facing life to live through yet,
I will not leave you with 'good-bye,'
For I shall love you till I die :
Forget me, God, when I forget !



ENVOY



I.

YE thousand follies of my youth, good-bye,
'Tis time to say farewell ; the sun has risen,
Painting with golden brush the morning sky :

See how the roses of our revel wizen ;
We must do something nobler ere we die,
Than drone our life out in a dreamer's prison.
God willing, I will rise up and approve
My life not all unworthy of my love.





II.

I passed my youth with shadows, with the dead
Who made love famous in their songs and earned
Sad laurels by the tears that lovers shed,
And many a melancholy lesson learned
From the green grave where Keats is lapped in lead,
From that sea-shore where Shelley's body burned,
From that dark water where Petrarca's muse
Hallows the silent fountain of Vaucluse.





III.

Small wonder 'twas that when at last I quitted
Those moonlit spaces for the realms of day,
That still before my eyes the phantoms flitted,
That still above all noises rose the neigh
Of that winged steed who waited, bridled, bitted,
For me to mount his back and ride away
To that dim kingdom fashioned out of clouds,
Where buried lovers cast away their shrouds.





IV.

Too long in that dark kingdom I delayed,
Where ghostly lovers throng the twilight air,
Mimnermus read the dirge of youth, the shade
Of Sappho twisted violets in her hair,
Ronsard with all his stars about him strayed,
Tibullus sang of Delia and despair ;
With phantoms such as these I watched the streams
And trod the windless meadows of my dreams.





V.

'Tis told in Persian, kind as a caress,
How Hafiz, the sweet singer, could not raise
His poet's hand to touch a single tress
Of the belov'd one's hair, yet Hafiz' gaze
Was fixed for ever on her loveliness ;
And how dare I uplift a faltering phrase
Against the doom which chilled immortal tears,
To words that last beyond the waste of years.





VI.

There is a story, such as ancients tell
To children by the fire, of fairies themed,
How one who served the gentle people well
Demanded gold for pay, which, while it gleamed,
Turned to dead leaves that through his fingers fell :
I know a lover like to him, who dreamed
Love crowned him poet, and, awaking, grieves
For glittering verses turned to withered leaves.





VII.

To call myself unhappy is untrue :
Is he unhappy who can love the best,
And for that love begins his life anew,
Rouses his limbs from their ignoble rest,
And passes from the House of Dreams to do
Some deed of honour, enter on some quest,
Led by Ambition's starlight, and the trust,
His name shall not be written in the dust ?





VIII

Life still has laurels, the world's ways are wide ;
I may be friends with Fortune, win my fight,
Wearing your colours, though the stars denied
Contentment to your lover ; I delight
To think you might have sometime said with pride,
‘ He wore my colours, called himself my knight ’ ;
And if I fail—why, I shall only be
One swimmer more gone down in the great sea.





IX.

Martyr and Saint, from whom I take my name,
Remembering how the heathen deities
Were served by thee before conviction came
With the free wind from Judah's olive-trees,
And how at last, rather than feed the flame
Of the false gods, you smiled at agonies:
By thy youth's errors, plead for my offence,
And lend thy strength to be my soul's defence.





X.

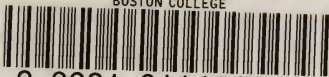
The mocking legend of my line declares
Proudly that to the Faithful and the Brave
Nothing is difficult. Shall he who wears
This blustering blazon bow himself a slave
To iron Fortune, or accept the dares
Of hazard? I have chosen. In the grave
My youth lies buried. In this hour of strife
'Tis written, 'Here beginneth the New Life.'



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